

Ouachita National Forest

Cold Springs Ranger District

For Immediate Release (November 4, 2009)

Contacts: John Strom at 675-3233

Local Recreation Area, Roads, and Trail Unsafe From Recent Tornado

Ouachita National Forest - Knopper's Ford Recreation Area (day use and camping area) and a portion of the Sugar Creek Multi-purpose Horse and Off-Highway Vehicle Trail are temporarily closed because of hazardous and downed trees from a tornado that occurred October 29th.

These areas are located in northern Scott County and southern Logan County on the Cold Springs Ranger District throughout an area from White Oak Mountain to south of Sugar Grove and the Dry Creek Wilderness Area, approximately 10-15 miles southeast of Booneville.

Hazardous conditions will remain until necessary timber salvage and residual cleanup can be completed. Caution should be exercised while traveling Forest Road 178, south of White Oak Mountain, due to downed timber, leaning trees, and hanging limbs.

The Sugar Creek trailhead, just south of Knopper's Ford, is closed and cannot be accessed. The east and west sides of the trail will remain open. The west side can be accessed from multiple entry points and from the Foster Fields trailhead on Forest Road 20, east of the Tate community. The central portion will be closed, basically in a quarter mile wide line from White Oak Mountain to Knopper's Ford Recreation Area.

"We want to ensure these areas are safe for the public before we reopen them," said Recreation Assistant John Strom. "There are at least 100 trees down in the area of Knopper's Ford campground. Several trees have broken tops and hanging limbs, which are referred to as 'widow makers'."

"We cannot officially close Knopper's Ford because County Road 19 goes through the middle of it, but we strongly encourage the public to avoid this site because of these hazards," said Strom.

“Knopper’s Ford is a favorite spot for hunters to camp,” Strom said. “We want to get the word out to those hunters who typically camp at Knopper’s Ford that they will have to make other plans this year.”

To provide a substitute camping and day use area, Jack Creek Recreation Area, just north of Knopper’s Ford will remain open throughout the winter for public use.

According to Strom, it is possible that the entire multi-purpose trail can be reopened by late fall, but it will probably be next summer before Knopper’s Ford Recreation Area can be utilized again.

For more information, contact Recreation Assistant John Strom at 479-675-3233.

-30-

Photo and cutline to follow



Tornado Damage – The photo above shows some of the damage to a picnic table at Knopper’s Ford Recreation from a tornado that occurred on October 29th.